



COMMUNITIES GOING ACTIVE

Toolkit to Address Individual
Barriers to Active Transportation



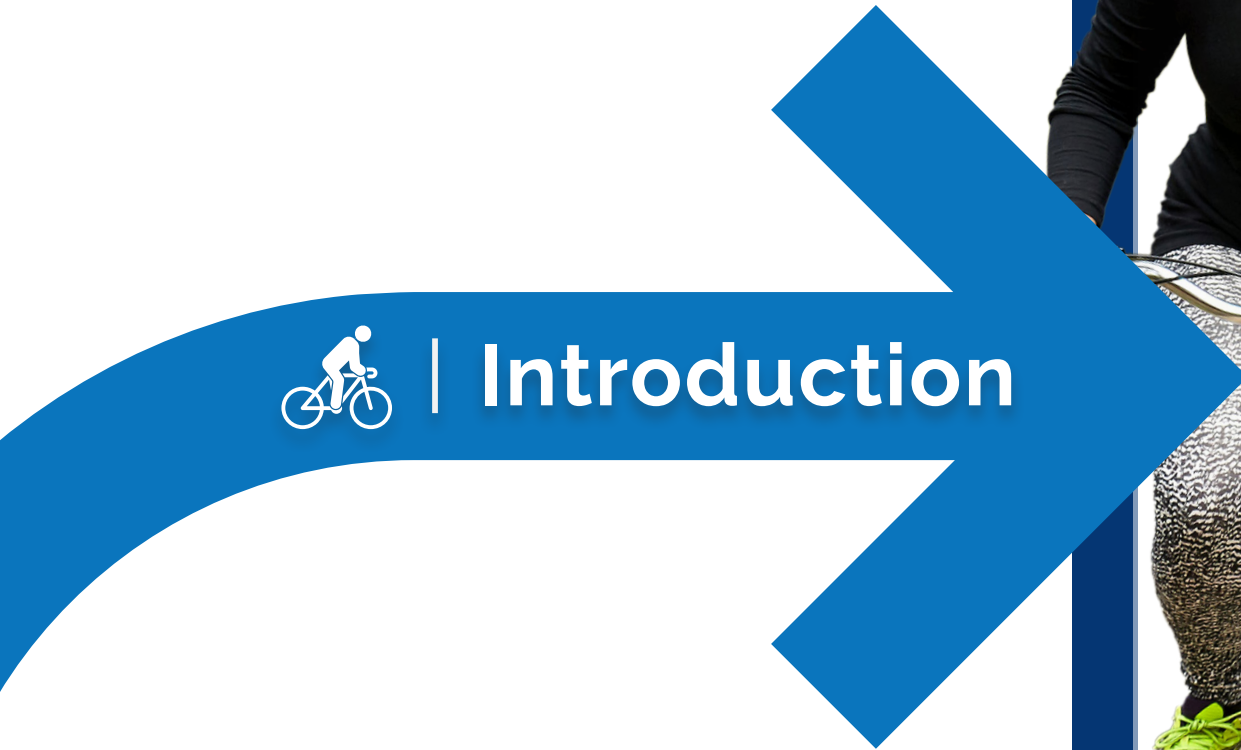
**BC Alliance for
Healthy Living Society**





Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 2 |
| Social Support and Modelling | 5 |
| Education and Guided Programs | 14 |
| Gamification and Friendly Competition | 17 |
| Coaching | 22 |
| Multiple Interventions | 27 |
| Providing Access: Equipment Libraries and Share Programs | 27 |
| References | 32 |



Introduction



Active transportation has many benefits: it can reduce traffic congestion, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and encourage communities to be physically active, which in turn helps prevent chronic diseases and foster mental wellness.



reduce traffic congestion,



lower greenhouse gas emissions



encourage communities to be physically active

Active transportation refers to transportation that is powered by a person to get to places. That may look like walking to school, cycling to work, kayaking across a lake to see friends, running errands on a scooter or rolling from Point A to Point B.

We are fortunate to live in a beautiful province with many natural trails and built environments that foster active transportation in our communities. However, many people who live in British Columbia experience real and perceived barriers that prevent them from using active transportation infrastructure; so one of the challenges in promoting active transportation is to help people overcome those barriers.





That's where this toolkit comes in.



This toolkit was informed by research on some of the most effective ways to address the barriers preventing many people from using active transportation. This includes interventions that aim to improve confidence, competence, motivation, knowledge, and awareness in a community. It presents examples of real projects and programs used in communities to motivate and support people to be active.

However, this toolkit is merely a guide. It is not meant to dictate how organizations should encourage active transportation in the community. Instead, this toolkit provides examples of successful programs and projects that can be customized to meet local needs or spark new ideas that address conditions unique to the community.





Social Support and Modelling Behaviour



Social support can play a big role in encouraging active transportation in communities and people maintaining those habits. Being part of a community where active travel is the norm encourages others to try it too and maintain those habits, which is why the social aspect of active transportation is important for organizations to keep in mind.

When creating programming or launching projects, consider the social aspects of active travel:

- *Is it possible for the program to have easy registration for families or groups of friends?*
- *What are ways the program or organization can provide support for families with young children and*
- *How can the program be adapted for older adults who may have limited mobility?*

Adding social support to programs helps participants feel like they are part of a bigger community, which is both motivating and reinforcing.

Studies show that when people are given the opportunity to analyze their habits and how they compare with others, they feel motivated to improve their behaviour.¹



Here are some examples that support the social aspects of active transportation that organizations can implement in programs:



Launch a Walking School Bus Initiative

A walking school bus or a bike train is a good way to get students physically active together, while also taking advantage of the social aspects of active travel as walking or cycling together gives them the chance to feel like they are all part of a wider community and norm.



Photo by Michael J. Cynecki

Some best practices for developing a walking school bus program include:

- Working on logistics with school administration and staff, and recruiting parent volunteers
- Route planning to ensure there are paths to school (or safe trails, if a bike train is being organized) and
- Keeping parents and students organized and informed using sports apps or something similar.

A program like this will give students the opportunity to support and encourage each other, while also receiving feedback from supervising adults.



Create Cycling, Rolling or Scootering Groups

Create a cycling, rolling or scootering group that takes people to common or popular locations within the community (the grocery store, farmer's market, park or landmark) every week. Better yet, pair it with a bike or kick scooter lending program.



A weekly program like this can be modelled on walking groups that take people on recreational walks but instead, people have the opportunity to run errands together while still socializing, encouraging each other and share tips on active travel. This way, participants have the chance to familiarize themselves with the infrastructure and plan their routes.

A program like this can also combine multiple interventions such as coaching, social support and behaviour modelling, and gamification, among others, which is effective in encouraging use of the community's active transportation infrastructure.



Host "Active Travel Week" Programming

Hosting "Active Travel to Work or School Week" is a good way to incorporate social support into active transportation.

Programming like this gives people the opportunity to cycle, scooter, roll or walk to work or school together, and activity leaders have the

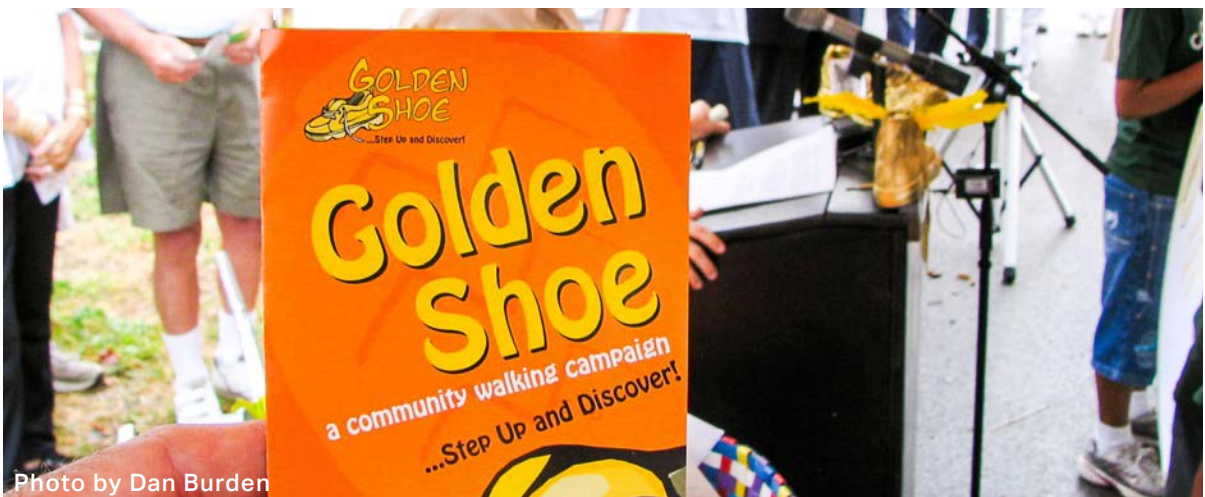
opportunity to provide information on road safety, bike or scooter maintenance, routes, as well as coaching for those joining the initiative as first-time active commuters.

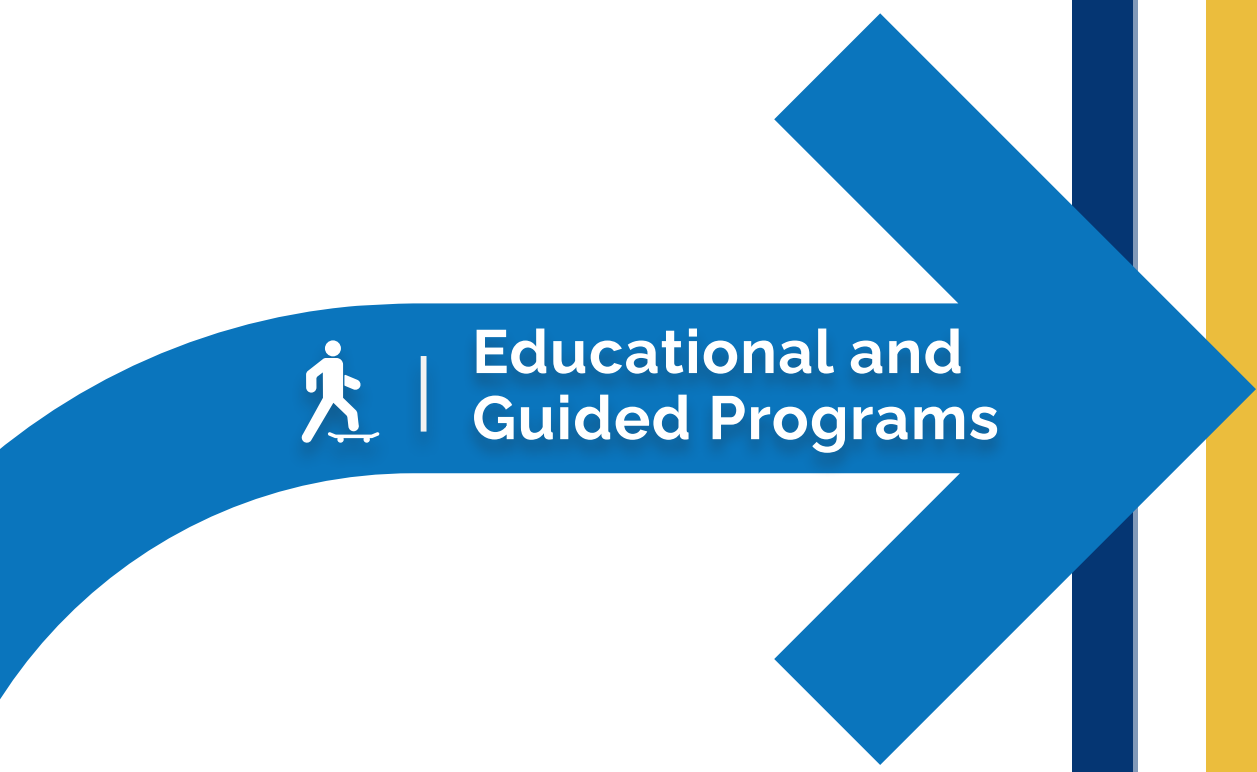
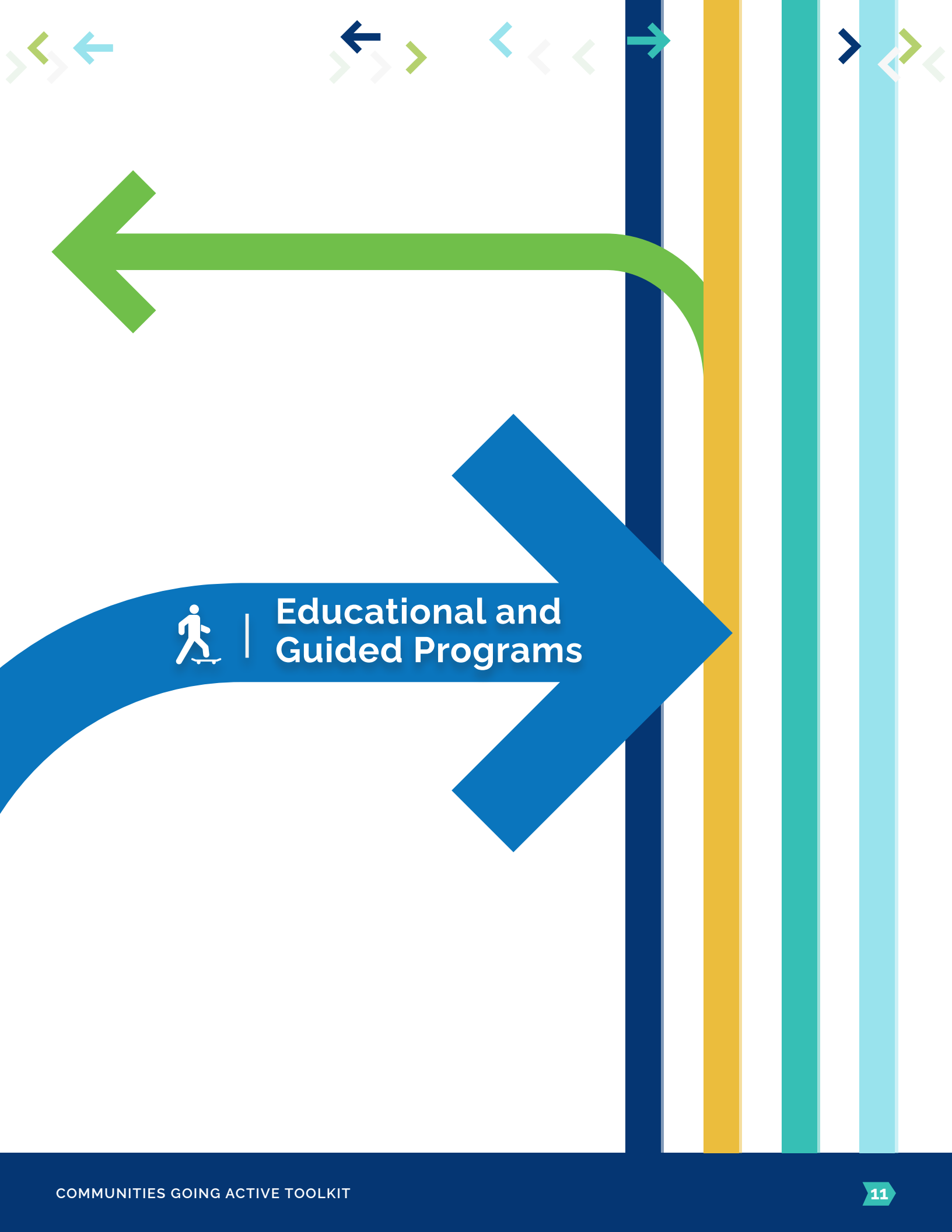


Newsletters

Newsletters provide the space for community members to share their stories on using active transportation infrastructure or their tips on how to stick with the habit, which can be encouraging for other community members who are starting their active transportation journey.

Newsletters can also incorporate maps or profile routes and other infrastructure such as end-use facilities where commuters can find secure parking, lockers and showers.





Educational and Guided Programs

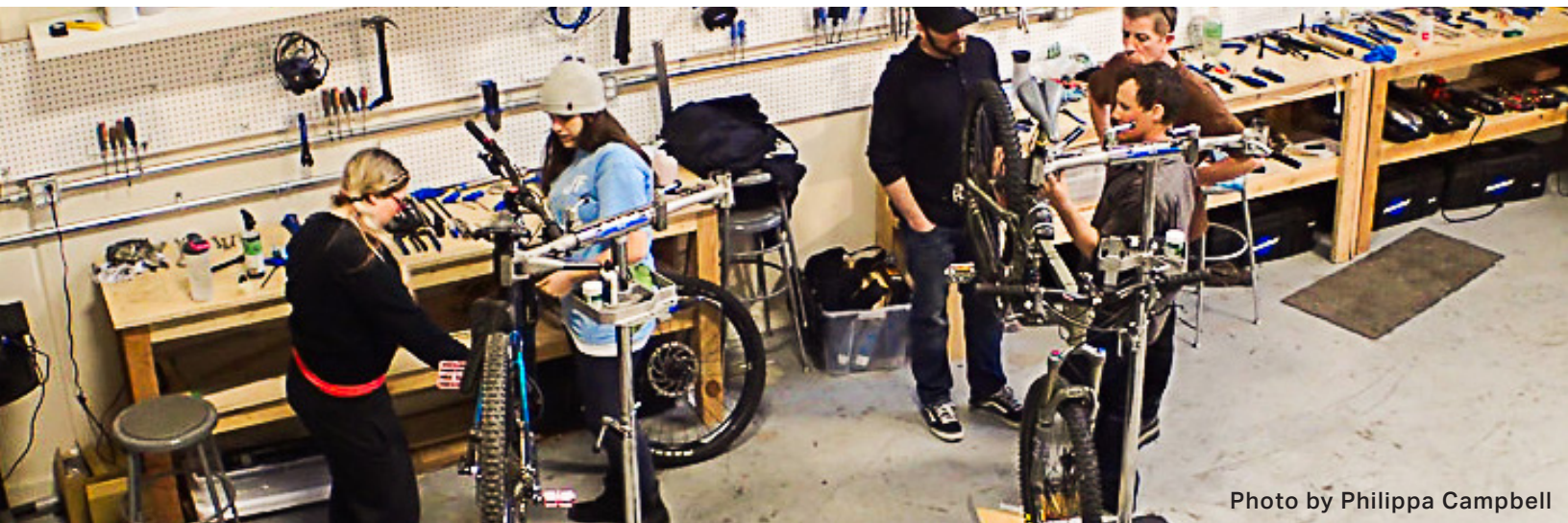


Photo by Philippa Campbell

Educational and guided programs address competence, knowledge, and confidence in active transport users.

Organizations or municipalities can create or host an educational series, where participants are taught how to maintain their bikes, e-bikes or scooters, ways they can modify their ride (such as adding trailers for groceries or child seats, among other things), as well as road and trail safety.

Learn to Bike Camps for Kids

[Pedalheads](#), an educational summer camp offered in several cities throughout the province, teaches children how to cycle safely on roads and trails. Young cyclists learn how to switch gears, make hand signals, ride in light traffic, and build their stamina for long-distance riding. The program focuses on children's confidence and provides them with the tools to become competent active commuters.

The goal of the program is to create lifelong cyclists and active commuters. Studies show that promoting and encouraging physical activity and active travel in children ensures that they will carry these activity patterns and habits into adulthood.²

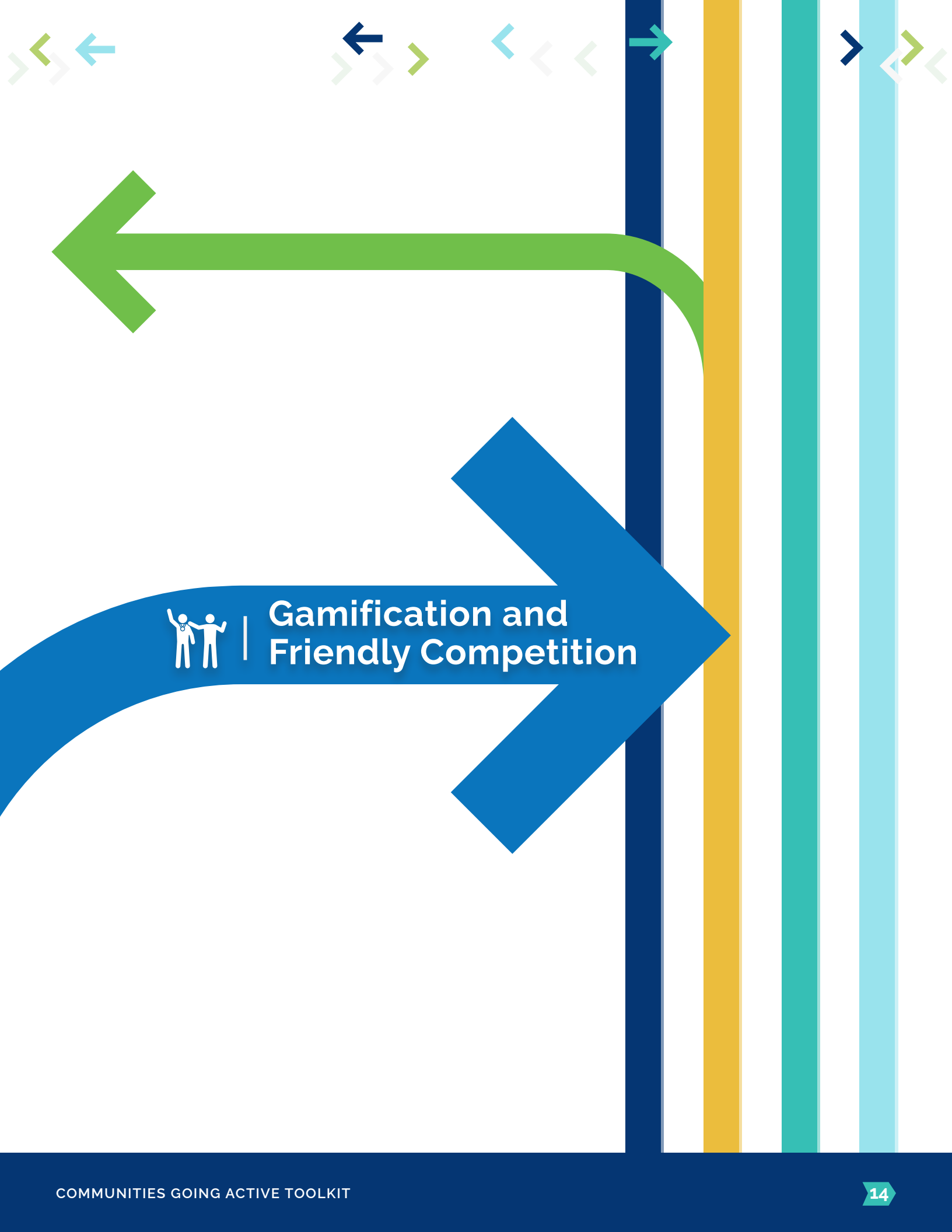
Streetwise Skills and Bike Buddies

An example of a successful program is [HUB Cycling](#)'s educational series. Active travel also includes wheelchairs, roller skates, and kick scooters among others, so developing a program that addresses other modes of active commuting can broaden the reach in the community.



HUB Cycling also offers a [Newcomer Bike Mentorship program](#), which pairs newcomers to Canada with volunteers who introduce them to cycling routes, rules of the road and safety practices. Offering programs or courses like this are a useful way to encourage physical activity and cultivate a sense of belonging for those who are new to Canada.

An educational program like this pairs well with a sharing or lending program, as it addresses users' competence and confidence, and gives them access to a means to participate in active travel.



Gamification and Friendly Competition



Photo by Michael J. Cynecki

Hosting friendly competitions and offering rewards encourages active transportation use, especially in the short-term. Competitions and gamification can help put active transportation on the public radar, which can raise awareness of infrastructure and support future use. Friendly competitions also provide an opportunity for social support and give community members an incentive to use active transport modes and infrastructure.

Below are examples and ways to make active transportation exciting in the community:



Add Competition to Existing Guided Walking or Cycling Programs

Organizations that already host guided programs can provide a step count or kilometre goal to make the activity enticing to more people in the community.

Guided programs offer locals an opportunity to see what others in the community are doing to sustain active transportation habits. This provides social support and community and can show that active transportation as a social norm in the community, which are proven to encourage people to continue active commuting.

Boosting Walking with Gamification

Public health researchers in Japan used gamification and competition to help increase baseball fans' daily steps in 2022.³ The study showed that giving people the opportunity to compare their progress with others and compete in a friendly way pushed them to walk more.

How did they do it? The Pacific League professional baseball league launched an app that encouraged baseball fans to be more physically active, giving app users step goals. Users who met or surpassed step goals were rewarded with baseball players' collectible photos. Surpassing other users' steps also gave participants additional incentives.



compare progress and compete in a friendly way



surpassing goals or other users' steps goals gave rewards and additional incentives

This type of intervention can be translated to active transportation too. Schedule a "Walk and Roll" challenge or a "Walk to School and Work Week" a month or a few weeks leading up to a local community event. Use text messages, email newsletters and social media to provide encouragement and feedback, as well as a way for participants to submit step counts or mileage (if they are cycling or rolling, for example) so they can see their progress.



Host “Step Up” Challenges in the Community

“Step Up” challenges give participants a chance to explore the active transportation network in the area, and familiarity using it. Hosting challenges also creates an opportunity for people to meet others and provide each other with support and encouragement.

Step Up Community Challenges

Participate in Canada-wide events such as the [Commuter Challenge](#) or ParticipACTION's [Step It Up to Spring](#) Challenge or [Community Challenge](#).

Widely promoted events like these provide marketing that can be leveraged by community organizations or municipalities to promote local active transportation initiatives and routes.



These events offer a competition component and prizes, which are proven ways to encourage active travel while also providing coaching and an opportunity for social support.



Gamification With Other Interventions

Use gamification and competition techniques in conjunction with other interventions such as providing instruction and training, coaching, feedback, and offering rewards and incentives.

Go By Bike Week

An example would be participating in a program like [GoByBikeBC's](#) Go By Bike Week in the fall and spring. Incentivize registration and participation by offering rewards (i.e., gift certificates to a grocery store or a bike shop). Registered participants can then receive safe active travel tips and coaching as part of the event, as well as feedback on their progress.

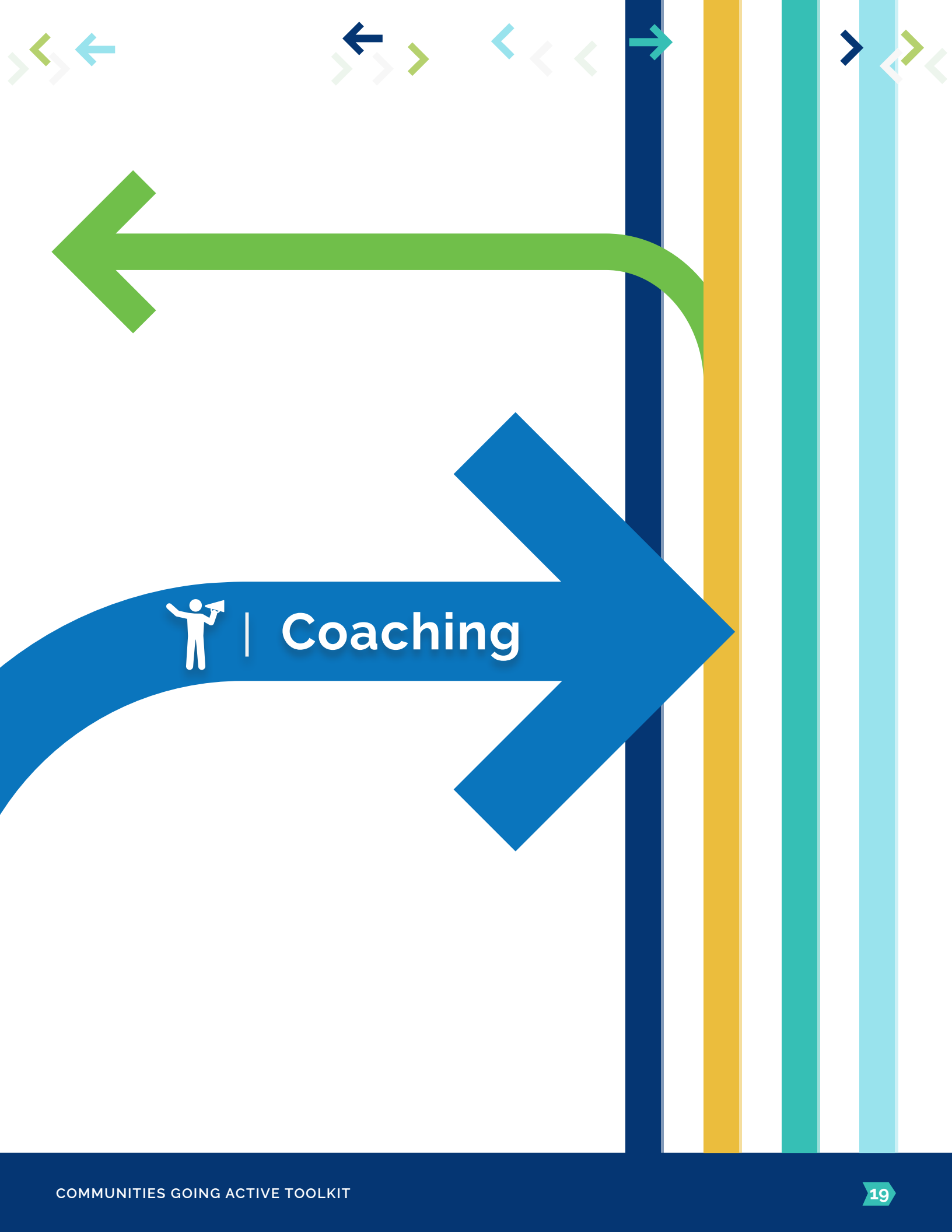


offering rewards
for registration and
participation



participants
receive safety tips
and coaching

Go By Bike Week has expanded in the last few years to include rolling and scootering to school and work. Organizations or municipalities participating in this program can encourage community members to use kick scooters, wheelchairs, and inline or roller skates, among other forms of active travel.





Whether virtual or in-person, studies show that coaching and providing instruction increase the adoption of active transportation habits.⁴

Coaching should include goal-setting, encouragement and support. This can be done through in person programming or virtually with an e-newsletter or short text messages to encourage active transportation behaviour. When done well, it provides community members with resources and knowledge about routes and how to be safe. It also provides an accountability partner – the coach – who can then send reminders, help create personalized trip plans and answer questions.

Below are examples of how organizations can approach coaching for active transportation:



In-Person Coaching

In-person coaching can be provided as part of various programs community organizations offer, such as workshops.

This can take the form of an educational series, where participants are taught how to maintain their bikes, e-bikes or scooters, ways they can modify their ride (adding trailers for groceries or child seats), road or trail safety. Workshops where participants learn about cycling or pedestrian safety are also excellent ways to provide coaching and encouragement.



Text Messages

Quick “you got this!” texts are a good way to encourage active travel. Short texts that offer quick tips on making people’s active commute enjoyable, engaging and hassle-free can also be effective. A text service like this can be included in a guided or educational program.

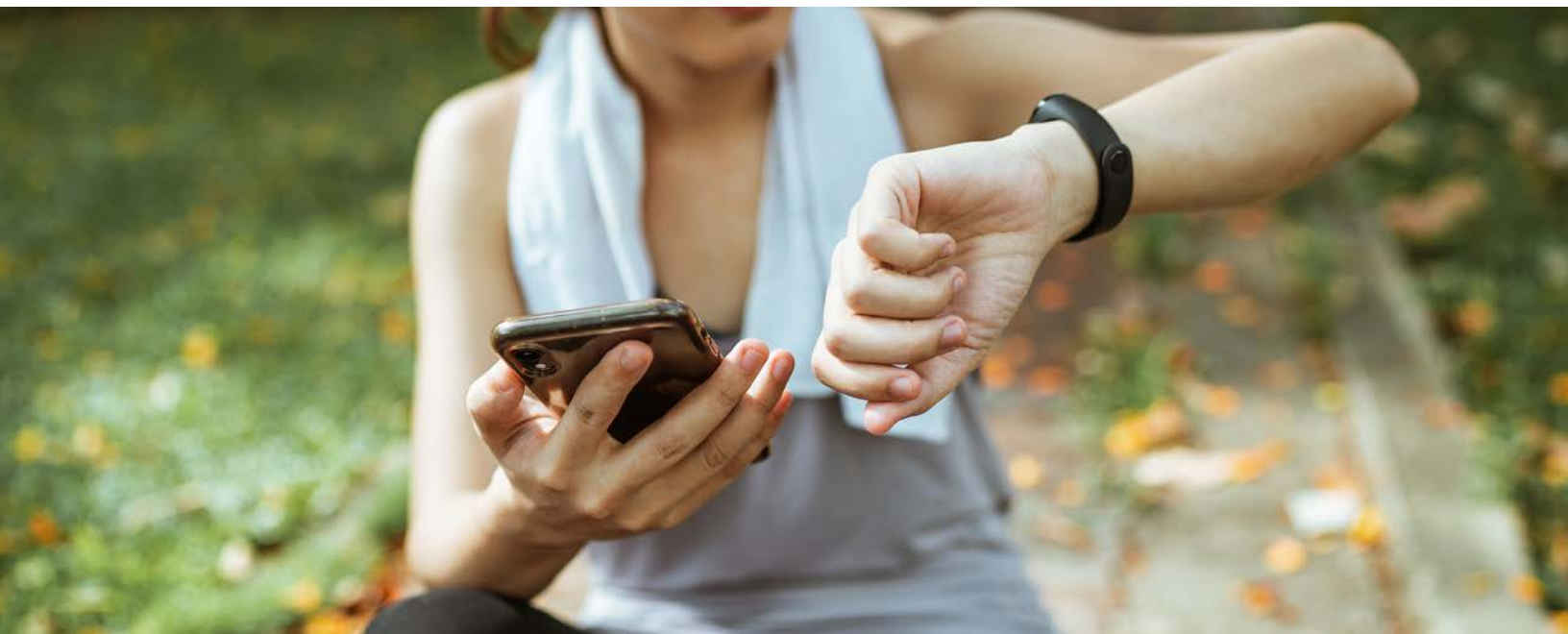
Several studies⁵ show that text messages⁶ are effective in promoting active travel as well as encouraging people to track their progress and stick to their active travel habits.

Texts that vary between coaching, providing encouragement and providing information are successful at motivating people to use active transit.



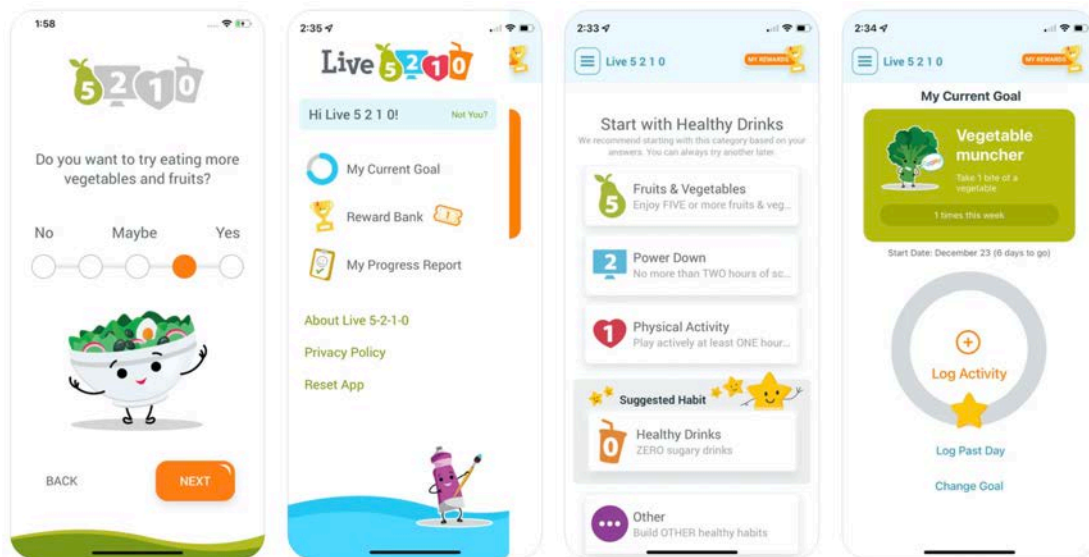
Apps or Websites

Smartphone applications and websites give organizations the opportunity to provide information about active transportation, encourage active travel, as well as virtual coaching. Apps and websites also offer the chance to track their habits and progress, as well as the chance to compare their progress with friends and family if they choose.



App Examples

Some examples of successful physical activity apps include [Aim2Be](#), as well as [Live 5-2-1-0](#).



These smartphone applications offer virtual coaching right from the app and allow users to set their goals (including physical activity, healthy eating, and screen time). After users set their target goals in the apps, they are then sent notifications that remind them to be active, and other relevant reminders depending on the habits they want to be working on.



apps offer virtual coaching

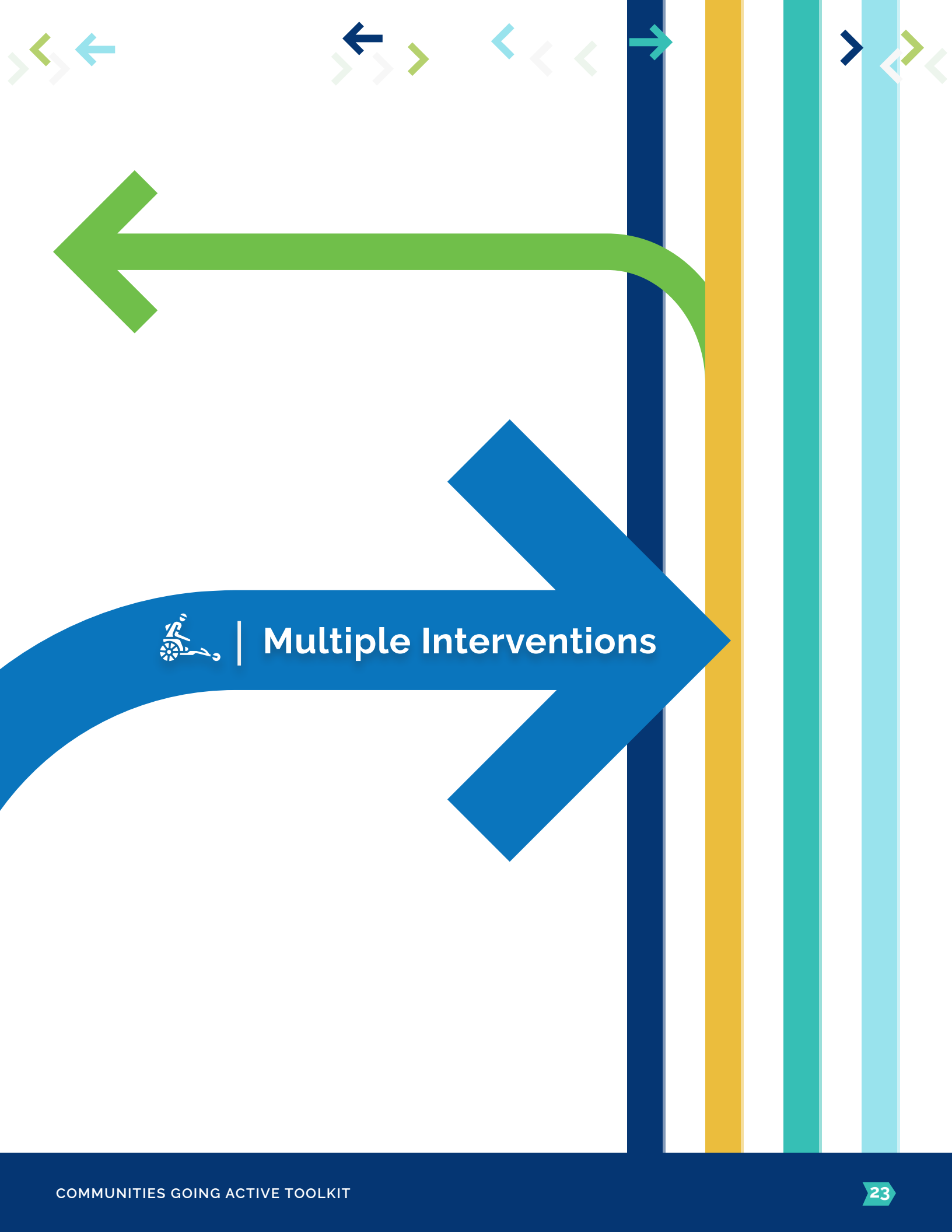


allow users to set their target goals



sent notifications and reminders to be active

Modelling active transportation apps after these examples can create a useful tool that will encourage people to build and sustain active travel habits.



Multiple Interventions



Combining multiple interventions is an effective way of increasing and encouraging active transportation habits.

This means addressing multiple barriers stopping people from participating in active travel through one initiative, which can look like offering a program where besides in-person coaching, participants also receive training on how to maintain their active transportation equipment.

Below are ways multiple interventions can be implemented into new or existing programming:



Host Information Sessions

Holding sessions where program leaders can provide participants with information on local active transportation routes, provide ways they can use the network safely and give encouragement and feedback is a good starting point.

Information sessions also offer community members the opportunity to join a network where they can compare progress with each other and model active transportation behaviour for each other.

Sessions like these can be delivered as single workshops or put together as an educational series; this way, participants have access to ongoing coaching and social support.

Program Example: Parkruns

Weekly [parkruns](#) are low-cost runs hosted in public parks. Research has shown that programs like this result in higher levels of commitment to physical activity and active transportation among participants.¹



A weekly event like this not only introduces participants to local routes and facilities, it also gives them the opportunity to collaborate with other participants, compare progress, and gives them the chance to receive feedback from program or activity leaders.



Weekly events like this are effective as they use a combination of interventions, such as collaboration, social support, behaviour modelling, coaching, receiving instruction and feedback. Use these techniques when developing weekly events like Wheel Wednesdays or Skate Saturdays.



Weekly Events

Weekly events or programs are a good way to implement multiple interventions, especially if they're designed to be low-cost. This can also be a good way to introduce community members to active transportation infrastructure in the area.



Recreational Walking or Running Groups

Recreational walking or running groups are a good way to introduce participants to active commuting and give them the space to learn about road safety while also receiving coaching and encouragement from program leaders and other participants.

Routes used by recreational groups are often part of active transportation networks, which can serve as a way to encourage people to try active modes for transportation. Examples of this include [Project Love Run](#) and [Seniors on the Move](#) (this site specifically has alternative transportation resources for older adults, including safe walking, cycling and rolling routes).





Providing Access: Equipment Libraries and Share Programs



The affordability and storage of equipment such as bikes or scooters can be a significant barrier to getting started. Making active transportation modes available near transportation infrastructure can support more people to go active more regularly, whether for work, school or leisure.

When people are given access to active transportation equipment, it also provides them the opportunity to try different types of active transportation modes without investing in or buying their own equipment or to experiment and see what works before they buy.

This may be even more relevant for specialized equipment like run-bikes for young children learning to ride or trail-a-bikes that attach a child's bike to an adult's for longer rides or bike trailers for children or cargo.

Providing access to bikes and e-bikes can also complement other interventions that address competence and confidence.



Photo by Laura Sandt

Here are some examples of how other organizations have provided access to bikes, e-bikes or e-scooters:



Public Bike and E-scooter Sharing Programs

Some examples of public bike and e-scooter-sharing programs include [Mobi in Vancouver](#) and [Bixi in Montreal](#). [Lime](#), [Spin](#) and [Neuron Mobility](#) have also been successful in the Okanagan, and [Evolve E-Bike](#) in Whistler.

However, if hiring a third-party company is not feasible or appropriate, then organizations and Indigenous and local governments can consider a bike library, share or lending program instead.



Equipment Libraries

A study from Southern Norway showed that combining [access to e-bikes and educational programs](#)⁷ not only encouraged people to use active transportation, but the combination also helped them sustain those healthy habits in the long term. The trial program provided participating families with young children access to different types of bicycles, e-bikes, trailers, helmets, and lights.



access to e-bikes and educational programs



helped sustain long term healthy habits



access to different types of equipment

The families also received training on how to maintain the bicycles, how to attach cargo trailers, how to change the tires and how to cycle safely in the winter. The study findings demonstrated that when given access to e-bikes, people are also more likely to continue cycling even in winter.



Closer to home, another example of a successful program that provides access to active transportation modes is [Capital Bikes](#), based out of Victoria. The lending program has bikes and e-bikes for adults and children, as well as cycling and safety courses for children, youth, adults and older adults.

E-Bike Incentives

In June 2023, the provincial government started offering [rebates on e-bike purchases](#), with rebates ranging from \$350 to a maximum of \$1,400 based on a person's income. The rebate program is also paired with a safety program to provide new cyclists with road safety skills.



Now, what about taking that program and implementing it in a city or through a regional district? [Denver's e-bike rebate program](#) is an example of a successful program delivered by a local government. The program is popular and has proved to be so successful in motivating residents to use active transportation, that there has been a measurable reduction in vehicle trips in the city.

The program is targeted to support low-income citizens. Residents are eligible to receive up to \$1,400 USD if they meet the income thresholds. Modelling a rebate program like this could be beneficial in communities where cost is a barrier to active transportation.



Access to Other Means of Active Transportation

Active transportation isn't just about biking, which means sharing or lending programs can offer so much more than just bikes, e-bikes or e-scooters.

If a community has good winter trails, providing access to snowshoes or cross-country skis through a lending library would be a good initiative. For communities with waterways, a canoe or kayak lending or share program could be another way to get people moving.





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